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UN Humanitarian chief says world must share Jordan’s refugee burden
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A top UN official on Friday urged the international donor community to share the Syrian refugee burden with Jordan.

At a press conference in Amman, Stephen O’Brien, UN undersecretary general for humanitarian affairs and emergency relief coordinator, said the international community must ensure “robust burden sharing measures” to support Jordan, to address the impact of the crisis and to preserve development opportunities.

O’Brien held the press conference following his field visit to the northeastern border, where, he said, he was able to see the living conditions of Syrians stranded on the berm in the no-man’s land between the Syrian and Jordanian border.

“As you heard I made a visit to the berm this morning where I saw the absolute reality of the harsh day-to-day living conditions of Syrians stranded there,” he said, adding that there is no access to basic resources such as food and water, while nearly 75 per cent of the people there are women and children.

“They desperately need assistance and humanitarian support,” O’Brien told reporters.

During his stay in Jordan, the UN official said he met with King’s Military Adviser and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs-of-Staff Gen. Mashal Al Zaben and Planning and International Cooperation Minister Imad Fakhoury, and discussions focused principally on the Kingdom’s national security concerns and finding solutions to the Syrians stranded at the northeastern border.

Jordan sealed the border after a terrorist attack in late June targeted a military post serving refugees, killing seven troops and injuring 13 others.

Prior to the closure of the northern border, Jordan was receiving dozens of refugees daily. However, since the attack, no Syrian refugee has entered the Kingdom, with the exception of those admitted for medical treatment.

According to the UN, more than 85,000 Syrian refugees are stranded at Rakban settlement in the no-man’s land between Jordan and Syria. Jordanian officials have put the number at more than 100,000, but there are reports of Syrians leaving the makeshift camp back to their homes. During his meetings with officials, O’Brien said talks reviewed progress made in the education services offered to Syrian refugees.

“I was also able to better understand the extraordinary efforts of the Jordanian authorities in responding to the needs of refugees,” he added. In regards to the people at the berm, O’Brien said the Jordanian authorities have facilitated and supported the delivery of humanitarian assistance, and that he was confident that Jordan will maintain its “honourable traditions” in offering assistance to the most vulnerable. “As the UN undersecretary general for humanitarian affairs and emergency relief coordinator, I underscore here and now the commitment of the international community and the United Nations to [supporting] the government of Jordan in responding to Syrian refugee crisis.” O’Brien said he met with key ambassadors of donor countries and that he briefed them on the current humanitarian developments in order to increase their support for Jordan, adding that donors were committed to boosting humanitarian assistance to Syrians.
The government is preparing the Jordan Response Plan (JRP) 2017-2019 to include all sectors and build on the outcomes of the London donor conference, a minister said on Sunday.

Planning and International Cooperation Minister Imad Fakhoury said the final draft of the new JRP should be ready within weeks, speaking at a meeting with UN Undersecretary General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator Stephen O'Brien.

Government departments, civil society institutions and representatives of donor countries are helping to draft the plan, Fakhoury said, according to a ministry statement.

The JRP 2016-2018 was designed according to in-depth analysis of the needs of refugees and host communities, in cooperation with the concerned ministries, donor countries, UN organisations and NGOs, according to Fakhoury. In light of the rapid changes affecting the plan, it will be flexible, Fakhoury said, explaining that projects and funding provided in 2016 will be reconsidered in the new plan, in addition to arising and unmet needs.

During the meeting, attended by UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator Edward Kallon, the planning minister highlighted the aid provided by the international community and the UN, stressing the “unique” bilateral relations and strategic partnership.

The continuous support from the UN to implement the JRP indicates the advanced level of the relations, Fakhoury said.

He called for an increase in aid to Jordan, in light of the burdens the Kingdom is shouldering due to the Syrian refugee crisis.

The programme to relocate refugees from Jordan to other countries should be expanded, he added.

The officials also discussed the ongoing preparations for the next UN Summit on Refugees and Migrants, and the Leaders’ Summit on the global refugee crisis.

Both events will be held in New York in September, on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly.

Meanwhile, O’Brien commended Jordan’s pivotal role in the region and the political and economic reforms that made the Kingdom a “role model” in the region.
WFP provides school meals to 358 thousand Jordanian students in the Kingdom

Published on 6 September 2016 in Al Ghad Newspaper in Arabic: https://goo.gl/6AYSFa

WFP Spokesperson in Jordan, Shatha Moghrabi, said that the World Food Programme in partnership with the Ministry of Education has contributed to the school feeding programme of 358 thousand Jordanian students in the Kingdom, while the programme takes care of 30 thousand Syrian students in Zaatari and Azraq refugee camps.

Moghrabi highlighted that there are 11 thousand Jordanian students in both Madaba and Irbid in addition to Azraq from previous students who benefit from the school feeding programme which is implemented through a healthy production kitchen which provides cheese and Zaatar pies, vegetables and fruits on daily basis.

The idea of the healthy production kitchen is based on the participation of local communities in the school feeding programmes, through training and employing women from the local community in production kitchens which are based in local organizations.

No more aid to Syrians through berm - source

Published on 6 September 2016 in the Jordan Times: https://goo.gl/vpIJjD

The Jordanian borders will no longer be used as a conduit to deliver aid to Syrian refugees stranded on the Kingdom’s border, an official source said on Tuesday.

The relief items will be delivered from inside Syria to some 70,000 Syrians in the no-man’s land, the source said, declining to give more details on the operation.

The decision came one month after the Kingdom allowed access of humanitarian aid for those refugees for the first time since the closure of the border and announcing the area an off-limit military zone in June.

The border closure was effected after a terrorist attack in late June targeted a military post serving refugees near the border, killing seven troops and injuring 13 others.

On August 3, food provided by the UN World Food Programme, bread from the International Organisation for Migration and UNICEF hygiene kits were lifted from the Jordanian side by 70-metre high cranes and lowered into encampments for the displaced in the southern Syrian desert.

The 650 metric tonnes of aid was delivered to two locations, Rakban and Hadalat, over three days, with quantities covering needs of refugees for one month.

The government was decisive back then in stressing that the delivery was a one-time occurrence and would not be repeated.

However, water is still being delivered on a daily basis according to UNICEF. Prior to the closure of the northern border, Jordan was receiving dozens of refugees daily. However, since the closure of the area no Syrian refugees have entered the Kingdom, except some injured Syrians who were allowed in for treatment. Jordan is home to some 1.3 million Syrians, according to the 2015 census.
NCFA, UNICEF to produce report on children in Jordan
Published on 6 September 2016 in the Jordan Times: https://goo.gl/4OGPTz

The National Council for Family Affairs (NCFA) is conducting research on the status of children in Jordan in 2016 for a joint report with UNICEF, the council said on Monday. The report will be a database to help create policies concerning children in different sectors, the NCFA said in a statement.

The council and UNICEF agreed to develop the report after a meeting between NCFA Secretary General Fadel Hmoud and UNICEF Representative to Jordan Robert Jenkins in Amman, the council said, adding that a new report would be issued every three years.

Watchdog calls for allowing aid into sealed border area
Published on 8 September 2016 in the Jordan Times: https://goo.gl/wx8thU

Human Rights Watch (HRW) on Wednesday urged Jordan to allow the delivery of relief aid into the no-man's land between the Syrian and Jordanian border, where around 70,000 refugees are trapped.

An official source said on Tuesday the Jordanian border will no longer be used as a conduit to deliver aid to stranded Syrian refugees.

The relief items will be delivered from inside Syria, the source said, declining to give more details on the operation.

The decision came one month after the Kingdom allowed access of humanitarian aid for those refugees for the first time since the closure of the border and announcing the area an off-limit military zone in June.

The decision was taken after a terrorist attack in late June targeted a military post serving refugees near the border, killing seven troops and injuring 13 others.

HRW said in a statement that new satellite imagery dated August 31 "shows the dire situation" of the trapped refugees.

“These latest satellite images confirm that the humanitarian crisis at the [Rakban] encampment has not been resolved, and appears to be getting worse,” said Nadim Houry, the deputy Middle East director at HRW. “Jordan should immediately allow humanitarian agencies to resume life-saving aid deliveries to alleviate their suffering.”

Jolie Pitt says Kingdom should not be left alone amidst refugee crisis
Published on 10 September 2016 in the Jordan Times: https://goo.gl/zCLpHF

The international community must do more to address the issue of the nearly 75,000 Syrians stranded in the berm — the no-man’s land between the Jordanian and Syrian border, UNHCR Special Envoy Angelina Jolie Pitt said on Friday.

“This is not a problem of Jordan’s making, or that Jordan should be left to bear alone. They have been warning for years that they would reach a point where they on their own could do no more,” the Academy Award winner said in remarks during a visit to the Azraq Refugee Camp, some 100km east of Amman.

“The world has known about the situation in the berm for months, but no solution has yet been put forward,” Jolie Pitt, who met with Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Nasser Judeh on Saturday, said, according to a statement posted on the UNHCR website.
“This is my fourth visit to Jordan since the conflict in Syria began. It is almost impossible to fathom what the last five years have meant, in the lives of refugees in Jordan and elsewhere in the region. Not a single family in this camp of 60,000 people has not suffered loss and trauma,” she added.

“But as difficult as conditions are, refugees here count themselves among the lucky ones…For all the good intentions, extraordinary efforts in the field, and the generosity of host communities, it is impossible to say that we, as an international community, are using all the tools at our disposal, or that we have even come close to doing enough to help the Syrian people,” the UN goodwill ambassador said.

Jolie Pitt stressed that the UNHCR and other agencies only have half of what is required to meet the needs on the ground to deal with the refugee crisis.

“So my message to world leaders, as they prepare to gather at the UN General Assembly in 10 days’ time, is to ask that the fundamental root causes of the Syria conflict, and what it will take to end it, are put at the centre of the discussion,” she said. “Any increase in humanitarian funding saves lives and is deeply appreciated as well as absolutely necessary... After five years, refugees do not want to know by what percentage their lives might be made fractionally more bearable, but when they will be able to go home.”

Angelina Jolie commended the Jordanian people for their “decency, tolerance and humanity”. “You have given your all to helping your Syrian neighbours, from the earliest days of the conflict. You did so knowing that it would be extremely difficult, and that the war could last for years, and with huge demands on your resources and services in your communities already,” the activist said, addressing Jordanians.

“Having given so much, you are still dedicated to doing more, and I welcome and thank His Majesty the King for the courageous and forward-looking decisions to help a number of Syrians access work and education in Jordan. Thank you for your moral leadership,” she added, wishing families in the Kingdom and the region a happy Eid Al Adha. At her meeting with Judeh in Amman, Jolie Pitt discussed the refugee summit scheduled to be held in New York on September 20 and stressed the need for the international community to provide further support for Jordan. Judeh said reaching a political solution is a main requirement to end the humanitarian crisis, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

Jordan has reached the saturation point and its maximum possible ability to bear the Syrian refugee burden, Minister of Planning and International Cooperation Imad Fakhoury told representatives of donor countries and UN organisations recently. According to a ministry statement, e-mailed to The Jordan Times Saturday, Fakhoury said the refugee influx has put large pressures on the Kingdom’s resources, particularly water, finance and social infrastructure.

The minister made the remarks during a meeting with ambassadors and diplomats of donor countries, and representatives of UN agencies on Thursday evening to review pledges announced at the London donor conference in February and the Jordan Compact to deal with the repercussions of the Syrian crisis, which was prepared in cooperation with the UK, the World Bank, the EU and several partners from donor countries supporting the Kingdom.

Jordan at ‘saturation point’ in handling refugee burden - Fakhoury
Published on 10 September 2016 in the Jordan Times: https://goo.gl/4Dmig4

Minister of Planning and International Cooperation Imad Fakhoury holds talks with representatives of donor countries and UN agencies in Amman on Thursday (Photo courtesy of Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation)
Abu Ghazaleh Launches a study on the impact of refugee crisis in Jordan


The results of the study were presented during the launch, which included the analysis of the indirect impact of the Syrian Refugee Crisis in Jordan since 2011 until present, and the total indirect economic impact of the crisis on the Jordanian economy for the years 2014 and 2015 - that amounted to almost 5.78 billion US dollars in costs.

The study also showed that the rate of increase between 2014 and 2015 was around 38% and through application of this percentage for the year 2013 (negatively) and for the year 2016 (positively). The total impact for the period from 2013 to 2016 is approximately 12.37 billion dollars.

Minister of Planning and International Cooperation Imad Fakhouri stated that the timing of the study is very significant as it coincides with the UN General Assembly meetings and the Conference related to displacement, so it will be one of the tools which Jordan will be armed with to demand international support.

At the same time, the Minister urged the international Community to compensate Jordan for the hardships it endures on behalf of the international community.

Published on 8 September 2016 in Petra: https://goo.gl/TYrsGM
He underlines the significance of this study in calculating the indirect expenses endured by the Government because of the crisis indicating that the Government is scientifically and statistically attempting and in partnership with UN organizations and international agencies to document the international needs, the needs of the hosting communities and the Treasury to ask for support to alleviate the effect of the crisis that might go on and on.

Fakhouri said that the Government is working relentlessly on developing its response plans to the Syrian Crisis to be presented to the international community.

UN Humanitarian Coordinator, Edward Kollon, indicated that: "Since the start of the crisis, UNDP advocated the need to addressing Jordanian host communities, in addition to refugees in the country.

UNDP launched in 2012 a multi-donor programme to support host communities and refugees in Jordan focusing on the national and northern governorates of Irbid, Mafraq and Zarqa, with an inter-disciplinary package of support focusing on strengthening livelihoods and municipal services delivery.

The programme, totaling more than USD 70m and supporting more than 3 m residents, was successful in fostering social cohesion while innovating for results.".

H.E Talal Abu-Ghazaleh indicated, "This study includes all the indirect impacts of Syrian Refugees on the Jordanian economy." He pointed out, "According to the Geneva Declaration in 2008, the indirect costs refer to lost resources and opportunities resulting from armed violence? and this requires compensation from people and institutions."

He said, "This study does not include the impact of direct costs that are usually of interest to donor countries, although impact of the indirect costs are as equally important." He added, "The study also does not include the impact of Social Security and the economic effects that result from it."

Abu-Ghazaleh thanked UNDP for their extensive support in funding the study as a sign of their constant support. He also thanked the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation for providing the guidance and relevant data that was the basis for completing the study, pointing out that the government will request funding from parties, institutions, and countries based on the results of the study.

The UN will not distribute aid to Syrians on the first day of the truce

Published on 13 September 2016 in Al Ghad Newspaper in Arabic: https://goo.gl/pVoq80

The United Nations said on Tuesday that it will not delivery aid to civilian Syrians on the first day of the truce due to security concerns.

The UN envoy to Syria, Staffan de Mistura told reporters in Geneva: “I do not have any information about UN trucks moving during this period”, urging to get assurance that drivers and convoys will not be harmed.
Response to refugee crisis should be based on facts not wishful thinking
Published on 22 September 2016 in the Jordan Times: [https://goo.gl/tuPRQd](https://goo.gl/tuPRQd)

His Majesty King Abdullah on Tuesday reiterated that an apt response to the escalating refugee crisis is a collective global responsibility.

His Majesty made his remarks at the Leaders’ Summit on Refugees, co-hosted by the US, Jordan, Mexico, Canada, Sweden, Germany and Ethiopia.

The summit aimed at determining a set of measures meant to deal more effectively with the Syrian refugee crisis and its repercussions whether on the refugees themselves or host countries.

In his speech at the meeting, His Majesty underlined three points related to the refugee burden.

The first point he raised was the “vital importance of basing our actions on the reality of the situation, not simply our wishes or expediency”.

The King underlined Jordan’s long and first hand knowledge of this very complex issue that it outed at the disposal of the participants in the meeting.

After listing the facts about Jordan’s response to the refugee crisis and its impact on the country, he stressed that “such a situation is plainly unsustainable. And yet, all countries agree that the Syrian refugee crisis will be with us all for years to come, and a sustainable solution is key”.

He noted that Jordan has put forward an effective, sustainable, development-driven plan to support hosts and refugees alike, with an approach that builds on international partnership, trade, and investment to create opportunities and income that both Jordanians and Syrians need.

The second point is the need to work as a team. “The refugee crisis requires not just commitment but follow-through. Any effective, development-based, longer-term solution will need to engage host countries; donors; the private sector as well. Shortfalls in funding, lack of participation, will undermine shared goals,” he said.

“My final point is that a truly sustainable solution should begin by safeguarding Syrian women and children from being used by Daesh and other terrorist organisations, which are manipulating human trafficking and taking advantage of the movement of displaced groups. It is imperative that the international community steps up to help and provide support for Syrians inside Syria, and not wait till the refugee crisis further aggravates,” His Majesty concluded.

My friends, Jordan has done much and remains committed to doing the right thing. I hope we all do the same. I look forward to the success of our summit.
Jordan needs int’l support to provide services to refugees - Fakhoury
Published on 25 September 2016 in the Jordan Times: https://goo.gl/E0qM8C

Jordan has participated in a high-level panel discussion in New York on funding to solve the challenges facing refugees in middle-income countries, a Planning and International Cooperation Ministry statement said on Sunday.

Planning and International Cooperation Minister Imad Fakhoury said Jordan, which is hosting 1.3 million Syrians, cannot continue providing services to refugees without support from the international community, speaking at the discussion on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly last week.

The panel, headed by World Bank Group President Jim Yong Kim and UN Deputy Secretary General Jan Eliasson, met to follow up on an initiative to support a Concessional Financing Facility for the Middle East and North Africa region.

Fakhoury told the panel that Jordan had reached its maximum capacity in terms of infrastructure and required international support in the coming period, according to the ministry statement.

In New York, Fakhoury also deputised for Prime Minister Hani Mulki at a high-level meeting to discuss water resources, headed by Kim and UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon.

Jordan is one of the poorest countries in terms of as water, as per capita water availability in the Kingdom is 88 per cent below the international water poverty line of 1,000 cubic metres annually, the minister said at the meeting. Jordan is committed to its reform programme in the Jordan Vision 2025 and the executive development programme 2016-2018 to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals adopted recently by the UN, he added, in addition to adopting the water strategy for the years 2016-2025.

The minister also participated in a meeting to review the progress of work to deal with the Syrian crisis and the outcomes of the London donor conference.

Fakhoury stressed that facing the repercussions of the Syrian crisis was a global responsibility, and participants discussed the grants signed to support education and economic opportunities in Jordan. Fakhoury also took part in a ceremony to launch the “Farmer” initiative on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly. The initiative was established by the International Fund for Agricultural Development to help refugees in rural areas. In a speech at the ceremony, Fakhoury said Jordan has suffered direct losses of $8.6 billion and indirect losses of around $3.1-$3.4 billion due to the Syrian crisis over the last five years.

During his visit to New York, the minister held a number of bilateral meetings, in which he highlighted the importance of “big companies” benefiting from the EU’s agreement to simplify the rules of origin for Jordanian exports to Europe. He also reviewed the financial challenges facing Jordan as a result of the political situation in the region, the ministry said.
Kallon: Syria crisis threatens the development gains which Jordan achieved
Published on 26 September 2016 in Al Rai Newspaper in Arabic taken from the UN Radio broadcast: https://goo.gl/lTsXmY

To listen to the full radio broadcast, please click here.